

Treasure Maps

curated by **Janine Antoni**

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February 11 - March 13, 2004

**Earle Brown
Chitra Ganesh
Tim R. Riley
Michael Schumacher
Elizabeth Streb
Vinzenz Unger**

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cover: Chitra Ganesh kolam 2004 flour and water variable dimensions



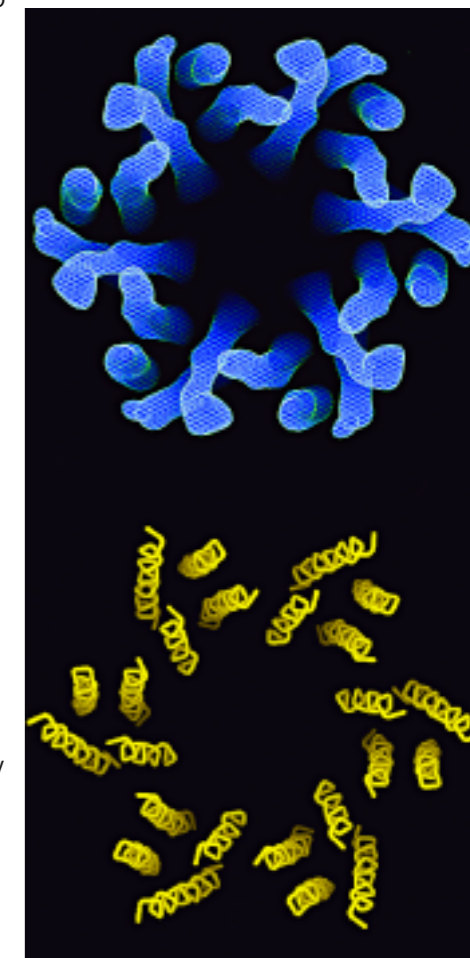
Like treasure maps, we view these images with only a suspicion of the treasure they might lead one to. The selection of works draws from a wide range of images that present visual thinking from outside the field of fine art. Spawned from necessity, the unique qualities of each image are the direct result of the specificity of the problem each addresses and the question with which each is concerned.

Chitra Ganesh watched her grandmother make kolams, which Ganesh describes as "line drawings made of rice flour, traditionally created on the floor at the beginning of each morning." She draws on this traditional practice to inspire her art. In this exhibition, she created kolams in the manner passed down to her. "Their creation is a daily practice specific to South Indian culture, and are most often the work of women and girls. A kolam invites Mahalakshmi (wealth and fortune) into the home, or protects a space from the evil eye. The crows are our ancestors, and they are invited to feed on the rice flour in a kolam's lines. These drawings are set at the thresholds of homes and spiritual spaces to mark a boundary between inside and outside, private and public, secular and sacred. I am drawn to how the form is culturally specific and abstract at the same time, and to its ephemeral and site-specific nature. As the day unfolds, the image comes undone, and its traces vanish when the ground is moistened and prepared for the next day's creation." Ganesh will make her kolams on the pavement in front of **apexart** periodically during the run of the exhibition.

Vinzenz Unger is a Molecular Biophysicist and Biochemist at Yale University. Here he exhibits a video that pictures the intricate architecture of molecules that allow cells to communicate directly. Unger created his video through a delicate process of making crystals, along with collecting and analyzing data. Unger explains, "Even within the tiniest of organism, thousands of molecules need to interact in a highly coordinated fashion to assure proper cell function. Therefore it is not surprising that for over half a century,

structural biologists have been drawn to the marvels of the miniature universe within living organisms. The three traditional pillars of structural biology are electron microscopy, nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy and x-ray crystallography. While different in their physical foundations, their capabilities, and applications, all three methods culminate in a visualization of structures so tiny that they need to be magnified 10,000,000-fold to unravel their beauty. The images in this exhibition show the structure of a molecule known as gap junction, determined by electron microscopy. The main purpose of gap junctions is to

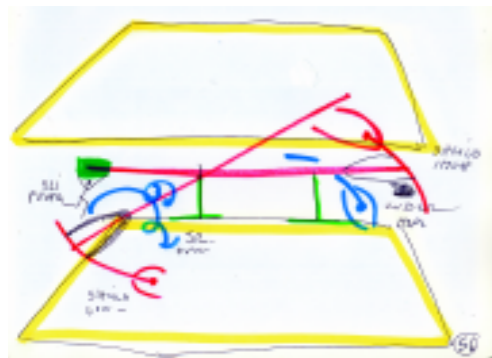
directly connect neighboring cells in our body, allowing the cells to directly communicate with one another. In our example, the gap junction channels connect cells in the heart, and play an important role in maintaining coordinated current flow through the heart muscle. Discovered by anatomists almost half a century ago, the detailed structure of these channels remained a mystery



Vinzenz Unger Gap Junction channels 2003 video

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until very recently. The pictures shown here were the first to visualize architectural details within the individual protein molecules that compose this complicated molecular tunnel. While not yet at a resolution where we can see every atom within the structure, interpretations of pictures like those shown in *Treasure Maps* allow us to build models of the channel that help us to understand how these channels work at the molecular level, and why certain genetic mutations in gap junction channels cause severe disease in humans."

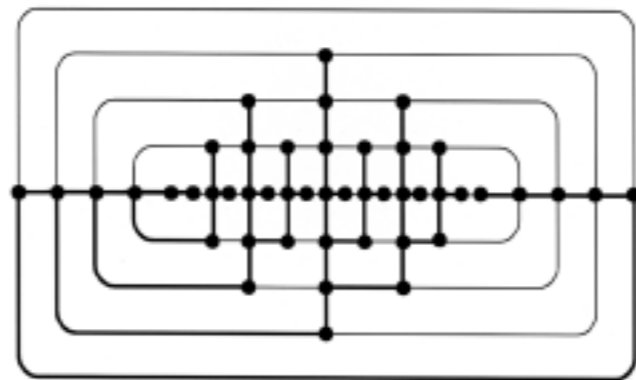


Elizabeth Streb *Fly* 1997 Dance notation on paper

Elizabeth Streb says that she cannot use traditional dance notation because her dancers' are hardly on their feet. Therefore she has developed her own form of dance notation specific to her dancers' distinct way of moving. In *Treasure Maps*, these notations are shown alongside documentation of the annotated dance. Streb's process of notating her choreography is illuminated when she explains, "The drawings serve as a schemata /story board/ master plan and as devices to organize the exploration of a set of conditions. These conditions vary from piece to piece. In *Fly* or *Up and Down* or *Surface* there is always a template which designates the structure we are working on. I repeat that template over and over, and I then draw stick type action figures within these outlines, with verbal comments and numbers and

arrows to describe what is happening temporally. Timing is the most ephemeral idea, it is hard to capture works, or 'designate'....which means trying to state on a paper surface an exact idea of the time any one move or movement requires....out of these isolated moments of 'time-bits' comes the eventual rhythm. The rhythm of a piece is the deepest part of the 'content' of action. It is the last idea to surface...it appears magically after every other question gets 'answered'. Other questions such as the where, what, how in time space and body. Usually I color code the different order of events, either with people, or which move happens at what time."

Tim R. Riley is a professor in the Mathematics Department at Yale University. In describing his diagrams he says, "This collection was drawn in the course of mathematical research in Geometric Group Theory (in some cases working in collaboration with S. M. Gersten of the University of Utah). They illustrate arguments in research articles or serve as visual aids and examples in the course of attacks on problems. Geometric Group Theory lies at the crossroads of algebra, geometry and topology. The object of study, *Groups*, are algebraic structures concerning



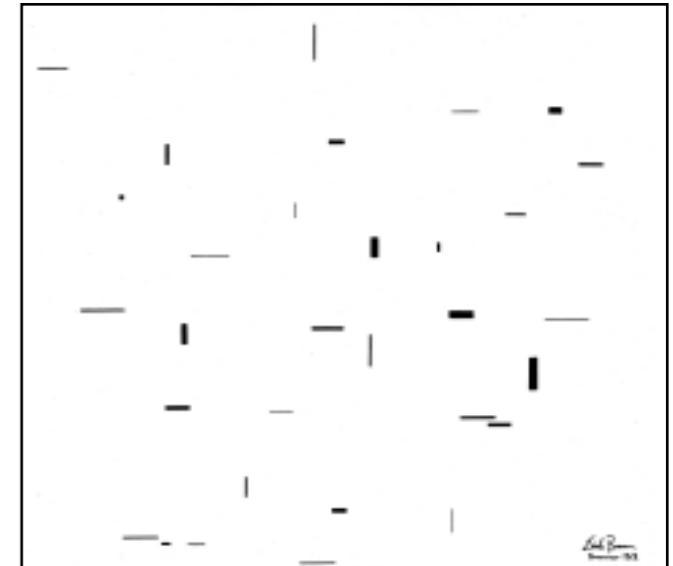
Tim R. Riley mathematics diagram undated

symmetries. Many of the images are of van Kampen diagrams, named after the mathematician who introduced them in an article in 1933. Discrete groups can be regarded as geometric spaces in which van Kampen

diagrams are combinatorial surfaces spanning loops, in a similar manner to how a soap film can be made to span a wire loop. At the same time a van Kampen diagram displays algebraic (or, in a sense grammatical) information concerning interaction between group elements. The subject of the images in this collection include: van Kampen diagrams in use as windows onto the underlying group; studies of combinatorial and geometric features of such diagrams; illustrations of underlying groups in simple cases; and a transition from the discrete to continuous geometry."

Earle Brown's graphic scores entitled *Folio* from 1952-3 are shown alongside a contemporary musical interpretation of his most radical of these scores, *December 1952*. Brown is credited for the invention of the "open form," a compositional technique and philosophy that brings the performer into a creative collaboration with the composer. Brown's most radical scores from this period feature no visual references to traditional musical notation. They describe visually what he wanted to hear, how he wanted the performers to relate to the score, how he wanted the musicians to relate to each other, and the kind of experience he wanted to offer the listener. As Brown worked on *December 1952*, he wrote the following note "... to have elements exist in space... space as an infinitude of directions from an infinitude of points in space... to work (compositionally and in performance) to right, left, back, forward, up down and/or transitory... a performer must set this all in motion (time), which is to say, realize that it is motion and step into it... either sit and let it move or move through it at all speeds [coefficient of] intensity and duration [is] space forward and back."

One of the most compelling qualities of Brown's contribution to music is a balance between freedom of interpretation and defined structure. This is beautifully explained when he says, "There must be a fixed (even flexible) sound context, to establish the character of the work, in order to be called "open" or "available form". We recognize people regardless of what they are doing or saying or how they are dressed if their basic identity has been established as a constant but



Earle Brown *December 1952* Music Composition on paper

flexible function of being alive."

For *Treasure Maps*, Michael J. Schumacher has linked Brown's score to the procedures used to generate the structure of his *Room Piece* installation. As he explains, "Thirty-one sounds were chosen, one for each figure in the score. As the sounds turn on and off the corresponding line is made visible or invisible. An attempt has also been made to "place" the sounds in space using the score as a guide."

In every case, the works exhibited in *Treasure Maps* are a radical translation of one form into another. The inevitable loss implicit in translation preserves the mystery of that which is being represented. Despite the fact that the specific references of each image may be unknown to the viewer, there is still an internal logic to intuit and contemplate. In the end, these images situate us in a place of wonder - somewhere between the maker's personal visualization and their inkling of a treasure contained within it.